

ISS 1295: Religious Freedom in Historical Perspective

Quest 1: Justice and Power

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Fall 2025
- 3 credits
- 100% In-Person, no GTAs, 35 residential students
- MWF Period 6 (12:50 PM–1:40 PM)
- CSE 0453

Instructor

- Professor Paul C.H. Lim
- CSE E574
- Tel: 352-294-3509
- paul.lim@ufl.edu
- Office hours: MWF 2:00–3:20 PM and by appointment

Course Description

What does religious freedom mean, and how has its definition evolved through history? Those questions lie at the heart of this quest course. Religious freedom, variously defined, is foundational within the constitutional texts of our founding democratic era, including the US Constitution, the constitutional documents of other nations, and the declarations of the human rights movement. Nested within any definition of religious freedom are competing notions of conscience, religious belief, religious practice, toleration, and freedom of association. Different faith traditions and strains of secularism all interpret these components of religious freedom in particular ways. Understanding this conceptual diversity is a crucial task for the modern age. A great many of our contemporary political and legal debates are structured around competing understanding of what religious freedom entails. Too often those debates are conducted without a full grasp of the history of religious freedom, and thus without benefitting from the conceptual richness that a grasp of that history provides.

Quest and General Education Credit

- Quest 1
- [Humanities](#) (H)
- [Writing Requirement](#) (WR) 2000 words

This course accomplishes the [General Education](#) objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.

The [Writing Requirement](#) (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.

Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Required Readings and Works

1. *Freedom of Religion: Foundation Documents and Historical Arguments*, ed. Steven Smith (Oxford, 2018). ISBN: 9780999728314.
2. Other required readings are available as PDFs on Canvas.
3. The writing manual for this course is: R.M. Ritter, *The New Oxford Style Manual*, 3rd edn. (Oxford University Press, 2016). ISBN: 9780198767251.
4. Materials and Supplies Fees: N/A.

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

1. Active Participation and Attendance: 20%

a. Participation: 10%

- i. An exemplar participant shows evidence of having done the assigned reading before each class, consistently offers thoughtful points and questions for discussion, and listens considerably to other discussants. See participation rubric below. (R)

b. Class Attendance: 10%

- i. On-time class attendance is required for this component of the course grade. Class attendance will be recorded daily. You may have two unexcused absences without any penalty, but starting with the third class missed your grade will be affected. Starting with the third unexcused absence, each unexcused absence reduces your attendance grade by 2/3: an A- becomes a B, and so on.
- ii. Except for absence because of religious holiday observance, documentation is required for excused absences, per university policy. Excessive unexcused absences (10 or more) will result in failure of the course. If you miss 10 or more classes (excused or not), you will miss material essential for successful completion of the course.

2. Experiential Learning Component (Rare Books Library Session): 10%

During the semester, the class will visit the Harold & Mary Jean Hanson Rare Book Collection in the UF Smathers Library. Students will meet with the collection's curator, and examine a wide range of manuscripts and printed books related to religious liberty. Students will experience handling these rare materials with their own hands and examining them directly. **By Friday, 10 October at 11:59pm**, students will submit a minimum 200- word assignment that compares at least two physical characteristics of these books examined at the library with a book you own (including photos of the relevant features of each).

3. In-class Reading Quizzes: 20%

- a. Reading quizzes will be administered at the **start of class on Friday, five times** throughout the semester. They will test the student's knowledge of the week's readings, and will contain short-answer, true/false, and multiple-choice questions. See examination rubric below. (R)
- b. Quiz dates: Weeks 3, 5, 9, 12, 14* (*Quiz #5 will be on 12/3).

4. Midterm Examination: 25%

- a. During **Week 7 – Friday, 3 October** – a midterm examination will be administered in class. The examination will be an in-class, 50-minute exam including essay, short-answer, true-false, and/or multiple-choice questions. Professor will provide written feedback on your essay and/or short-answer questions. See examination rubric below. (R)

5. Final Analytical Paper: 25%

- a. During **Week 13 – Friday, 21 November** – you will submit a 2,000 word (minimum) analytical essay addressing a prompt provided to you by **Week 5 (Fri. 9/19)**. You will develop an analytic argument based on your own thesis responding to the prompt, incorporating course material in the essay. Your paper must incorporate at least four course readings. See Canvas for more details. Professor will provide written feedback. See writing rubric below.
(R)
- b. Professor will evaluate and provide written feedback, on all the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.
- c. You may want to access the university's [Writing Studio](#).
- d. An additional writing guide website can be found at [OWL](#).

Grading Scale

For information on UF's grading policies for assigning grade points, see [here](#).

A	94 - 100%		C	74 - 76%
A-	90 - 93%		C-	70 - 73%
B+	87 - 89%		D+	67 - 69%
B	84 - 86%		D	64 - 66%
B-	80 - 83%		D-	60 - 63%
C+	77 - 79%		E	<60

Grading Rubrics

Participation Rubric

	Excellent (90-100%)	Good (80-89%)	Average (70-79%)	Insufficient (60-69%)	Unsatisfactory (below 60%)
Knowledgeable: Shows evidence of having done the assigned work.					
Thoughtful: Evaluates carefully issues raised in assigned work.					
Considerate: Takes the perspective of others into account and listens attentively.					

Writing Rubric

	A	B	C	D
Thesis and Argumentation	Thesis is clear, specific, and presents a thoughtful, critical, engaging, and creative interpretation. Argument fully supports the thesis both logically and thoroughly.	Thesis is clear and specific, but not as critical or original. Shows insight and attention to the text under consideration. May have gaps in argument's logic.	Thesis is present but not clear or specific, demonstrating a lack of critical engagement to the text. Argument is weak, missing important details or making logical leaps with little support.	Thesis is vague and/or confused, demonstrates a failure to understand the text. Argument lacks any logical flow and does not utilize any source material.
Use of Sources	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are well incorporated, utilized, and contextualized throughout.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are incorporated but not contextualized significantly.	Primary (and secondary texts, if required) are mostly incorporated but are not properly contextualized.	Primary and/or secondary texts are absent.
Organization	Clear organization. Introduction provides adequate background information and ends with a thesis. Details are in logical order. Conclusion is strong and states the point of the paper.	Clear organization. Introduction clearly states thesis, but does not provide as much background information. Details are in logical order, but may be more difficult to follow. Conclusion is recognizable and ties up almost all loose ends.	Significant lapses in organization. Introduction states thesis but does not adequately provide background information. Some details not in logical or expected order that results in a distracting read. Conclusion is recognizable but does not tie up all loose ends.	Poor, hard-to-follow organization. There is no clear introduction of the main topic or thesis. There is no clear conclusion, and the paper just ends. Little or no employment of logical body paragraphs.
Grammar, mechanics, and MLA Style	No errors.	A few errors.	Some errors.	Many errors.

III. Weekly Schedule

WEEK 1: CONSCIENCE AND TOLERATION IN ANTIQUITY

This week will lay foundations by considering the topics of conscience and toleration within some ancient sources. “Religious liberty” or “religious freedom” was not yet a recognizable concept in antiquity, but its components can be traced back to ancient foundations.

Readings (21 pages):

1. Cicero, *De Officiis*, 2pp. Canvas [hereafter, C]
2. Seneca, *On the Happy Life*, 7pp. [C]
3. Selections from Paul’s letters to the Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy, 7pp. [C]
4. Augustine, “A Christian Theory of Compulsion,” in *Freedom of Religion: Foundational Documents and Historical Arguments*, ed. Stephen A. Smith [hereafter, FR] (Oxford, 2018), pp. 9-11.
5. Edict of Milan, FR, pp. 7-8.

WEEK 2: CONSCIENCE AND TOLERATION IN THE MEDIEVAL WORLD

This week will consider the particular contribution of medieval scholasticism to understanding of conscience and toleration. *Tolerantia* as a prudential virtue within an overall scheme of natural law is considered. The weeks readings will also consider the justifications for religious coercion offered by the medieval church, and the particular forms of toleration established by the Ottoman empire.

Readings (28 pages):

1. Thomas Aquinas, “Of Unbelief in General (1271),” in FR, pp. 19-21.
2. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 79, a. 13, [2 pages]
3. Peter Chelcickly, “The Church Corrupted by Confusion with Temporal Power,” FR, pp. 26-27.
4. Papal Bull of Innocent III, *Sicut Judaeis*. [C], [1 page]
5. István Bejczy, “*Tolerantia*: A Medieval Concept,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 58, no. 3 (1997): 365–384. [C]

WEEK 3: RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES IN THE REFORMATION ERA

The Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and age of “Confessionalization” marked a major watershed in the history of religious freedom. Schism and religious disagreement produced new claims and counter-claims, which will be the subject of this week’s readings.

Readings (24 pages):

1. Martin Luther, selections from *On Christian Liberty* [6 pages]. [C]
2. Erasmus, "On Heresy and Heretics," in *FR*, pp. 32-35.
3. "Religious Peace of Augsburg," §7-§17 in Arno Buschmann, *Emperor and Empire: Constitutional History of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation from the beginning of the 12th century to the year 1806 in Documents* (Baden-Baden, 1994), pp. 220-225. [C]
4. Calvin, "Of Civil Government," in *FR*, pp. 39-40.
5. Pius IV, "Forbidden Heretical Books," in *FR*, pp. 48-50.
6. Sebastian Castellio, *Concerning Heretics* (1554), in *FR*, pp. 42-44.

Assignment: Reading Quiz #1

WEEK 4: HUMANISM AND THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGIOUS CONFLICT

This week will introduce students to the perspective of European humanists, who particularly grappled with questions of conscience and toleration in the era after the Reformation and during the wars of religion. Among those relevant traditions revived by humanists in this context was skepticism. This was also the period when the modern concept of "sovereignty" was invented, and figures such as Bodin and Hobbes grappled with the extent of religious freedom.

Readings (39 pages):

1. Michel de Montaigne, *Of Liberty of Conscience*, in *FR*, pp. 53-55.
2. Montaigne, "Apology for Raimond Sebond," in *The Essays of Michel de Montaigne*, ed. W.C. Hazlitt, trans. Charles Cotton (1877). [10 pages] <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3600/3600-h/3600-h.htm#chap12>
3. Philippe Mornay, *A Defense of Liberty against Tyrants*, in *FR*, pp. 50-52.
4. *The Edict of Nantes*, in *FR*, pp. 60-61.
5. Jean Bodin, *Six Books of the Commonwealth*, ed., and trans. M.J. Tooley (Oxford, 1967), pp. 183-193. [11 pages].
6. Dirck Volckertszoon Coornhert, "Synod on the Freedom of Conscience," in *FR*, pp. 55-59.
7. Gabriel Powel, "Against Toleration," in *FR*, pp. 62-63.
8. Galileo, "A Conclusion cannot be declared Heretical," in *FR*, pp. 74-76.

WEEK 5: BRITISH CIVIL WARS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Among the many political upheavals of the seventeenth century, the civil wars of Britain produced foundational writing on the nature and limits of religious freedom. Students will explore the diverse perspectives on this question that the conflict produced.

Readings (36 pages):

1. Henry Robinson, *Liberty of Conscience*, in FR, pp. 89–93.
2. Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution*, in FR, pp. 93–96.
3. Jeremy Taylor, *A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying* (1646), in FR, pp. 108–114.
4. Thomas Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan* (1651), [C], [20 pages].

Assignment: Reading Quiz #2

WEEK 6: LOCKE, SPINOZA, AND BAYLE

Students this week will read selections from three preeminent philosophers and political thinkers, who wrote in the era between the wars of religion and the Enlightenment. The major text will be Locke's famed *Letter on Toleration*, which crucially redescribed what had been a prudential concept into a positive virtue.

Readings (28 pages):

1. *Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*, in FR, pp. 168–169.
2. The Act of Toleration (1689), in FR, pp. 186–188.
3. The Four Gallican Articles (1682), [1 pages].
4. John Locke, *A Letter concerning Toleration* (1689), in FR, pp. 189–196.
5. Baruch Spinoza, "The Unalienable Right of Free Thinking on Religion," (1670), in FR, pp. 155–157.
6. Pierre Bayle, "On Toleration," in FR, pp. 170–174.

WEEK 7: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN ART & SATIRE

Students will leave the realm of high philosophy and law this week, and consider how, in the particular context of eighteenth-century England, the question of religious freedom for dissent was debated through satire. Students will also discuss a series of famous artistic images reflecting on the nature of religious freedom and coercion.

Readings (21 pages):

1. Daniel Defoe, *The Shortest Way with Dissenters* (1702), pp. 113–133. [C]
2. Jonathan Swift, *An Argument Against Abolishing Christianity* (1708), pp. 1–10. [C]

Assignment: Midterm Examination

WEEK 8: RELIGIOUS FREEDOM & THE ENLIGHTENMENT

This week students will consider the Enlightenment's approach to religious freedom from two perspective: philosophy and politics. They will study selections from two preeminent Enlightenment philosophers, and then edicts and laws produced by the "Enlightened despotisms" of the era.

Readings (59 pages):

1. Voltaire, *Toleration and Other Essays*, trans. Joseph McCabe (New York, 1912), pp. 11-34.
http://files.libertyfund.org/files/349/Voltaire_0029.pdf
2. Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: Religious Power and Judaism* (1783), pp. 3-29. [C]
3. Joseph II's "Edict of Toleration for the Jews of Lower Austria" (1782), [4 page]. [C]
4. Louis XVI's "Edict of Tolerance" (1787) [4 pages]. [C]

Assignment: Experiential Learning Assignment

WEEK 9: THE AGE OF DEMOCRACY I: THE US CONSTITUTION

Students will gain a contextual understanding of the establishment clause of the US Constitution's first amendment, perhaps the most famous constitutional guarantee of religious freedom in human history, but a deeply contested one.

Readings (51 pages):

1. Benjamin Franklin, "Against Establishment" (1772), in *FR*, pp. 291-293
2. "The Bill of Rights" of the Constitution of the United States, [2 pages] [C]
3. Virginia Assembly's Act on Religious Freedom, 16 January 1786. [2 pages] [C]
4. James Madison, "Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments," (1785) [5 pages] [C]
5. Samuel West, "Sermon to the Massachusetts House of Representatives," 29 May 1776 [23 pages] [C]
6. George Washington to the United Baptist Churches of Virginia of Virginia, May 1789.
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-02-02-0309> [1 page]
7. George Washington to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, 18 August 1790.
<https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Washington/05-06-02-0135> [1 page]
8. Jefferson to the Danbury Baptists, 1 January 1802.
<https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpost.html> [1 page].

Assignment: Reading Quiz #3

WEEK 10: THE AGE OF DEMOCRACY II: THE FRENCH REVOLUTION AND THE CHURCH

Students will explore a democratic revolutionary tradition different from the American experience: the French Revolution, and its particular republican conception of religious freedom, which was

entangled with controversial efforts to establish 'civil religion'. There will be some in-class analysis of revolutionary images.

Readings (27 pages):

1. J.J. Rousseau, "On Civil Religion," in *FR*, pp. 258–262.
2. Declaration of the Rights of Man (1789) [1 page]
https://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/rightsof.asp
3. "The Civil Constitution of the Clergy" (27 July 1790) [4 pages].
https://web.mit.edu/aorlando/www/SaintJohnCHII/Modern%20Church%20History%20Readings/26_01_Civil_Const_of_Clergy.pdf
4. Pope Pius VI, "Charitas" (1791) [10 pages]. <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/pius06/p6charit.htm>
5. Robespierre, The Cult of the Supreme Being [3 pages]. <https://revolution.chnm.org/d/436>
6. Edmund Burke, "Reflections on the Revolution in France," in *FR*, pp. 360–363.

WEEK 11: NINETEENTH-CENTURY LIBERALISM

The French Revolution and its aftermath produced the explicit theoretical tradition of liberalism, variants of which remain dominant in many Western societies today. This week students will explore how the classic liberalism of the period understood questions of religious authority and freedom.

Readings (53 pages):

1. T.B. Macaulay, "On the Civil Disabilities of the Jews," in *FR*, pp. 420–424.
2. William Gladstone, "The State in its Relations to the Church," in *FR*, pp. 455–459.
3. J.S. Mill, "Of the Limits of the Authority of Society over the Individual," in *On Liberty* (1859), pp. 140–176.
4. Lord Acton, "The Protestant Theory of Persecution," in *FR*, pp. 498–500.
5. Pius IX, "Syllabus of Errors," in *FR*, pp. 500–502.

WEEK 12: THE US SUPREME COURT: THE EARLY ESTABLISHMENT CASES

Now versed in many of the theoretical and political traditions that lay behind Western notions of religious freedom, students will begin a series of weeks intended to apply this knowledge to modern debate. This week, students will read parts of important supreme court decisions from the twentieth century.

Readings (30 pages):

1. *Everson v. Board of Education* (1947)
2. *McCullum v. Board of Education* (1948)
3. *Lemon v. Kurtzman* (1971)

4. Wallace v Jaffree: Rehnquist Dissent (1985)

Assignment: Reading Quiz #4

WEEK 13: THE FRENCH SECULARIST TRADITION

The “civil religious” and anti-clerical features of French republicanism inclined it toward a more secularist or “laicist” position. Students will explore this perspective, as it evolved from the Third Republic through more recent debates (in France and Quebec) over “secularism” laws.

Readings (44 pages):

1. Stephanie Henneville Vauchez, “Is French laïcité Still Liberal? The Republican Project under Pressure,” *Human Rights Law Review* (2017): 295–312.
2. Text of Quebec Bill 21 (5 pages)
3. Charles Taylor and Jocelyn Maclure, *Secularism and Freedom of Conscience*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Cambridge, MA, 2011), pp. 7–27.

Assignment: Analytical Essay Due

WEEK 14: MODERN THEORETICAL INTERVENTIONS

Modern debates over the extent and limits of religious freedom have proven contentious, partly reflecting the increasing presence of secularist perspectives. Students will read some recent interventions.

Readings (31 pages):

1. Nelson Tebbe, “How to Think about Religious Freedom in an Egalitarian Age” [15 pages]. <https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2655&context=facpub>
2. Andrew Koppelman, “Nonexistent and Irreplaceable: Keep the Religion in Religious Freedom,” *Commonweal* 27 March, 2015. [16 pages]. <https://www.commonwealmagazine.org/nonexistent-irreplaceable>

Video (1 hour):

1. Roundtable on Religious Liberty: Harvard Law School.

WEEK 15: THE US SUPREME COURT: RECENT REFINEMENT

This week students round of their reading of Supreme court decisions dealing with religion and religious liberty. The focus here will be on the more recent decisions which now govern this area of American life.

Readings (40 pages):

1. Employment Division v. Smith (1990)
2. Lee v. Weissman (1992)
3. Van Orden v. Perry (2005)
4. Burwell v. Hobby Lobby (2014)
5. Trinity Lutheran v. Comer (2017)

Assignment: Reading Quiz #5

IV. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the [Quest General Education student learning outcomes](#) for Humanities (H).

Humanities (H) Humanities courses must afford students the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy, and must include selections from the Western canon.

Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives.

Content: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*

- Identify, describe, and explain the methodologies used across humanities disciplines to examine essential ideas about religious liberty (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** midterm exam, analytical essay, in-class reading quizzes.
- Identify, describe, and explain key ideas and questions about the history and practice of religious liberty to the present (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** midterm exam, analytical essay, in-class reading quizzes.

Critical Thinking: *Students carefully and logically analyse information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*

- Analyze how philosophical, legal and historical works from the medieval period through the early twenty-first century explore the nature of religious liberty (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** analytical essay, midterm exam.
- Analyze and evaluate specific accounts of human reaction to concepts that challenge the concept of religious liberty, using close reading, critical analysis, class discussion, and personal reflection. (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** analytical essay, midterm exam.

Communication: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*

- Develop and present clear and effective written and oral work that demonstrates critical engagement with course texts, and experiential learning activities (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** analytical essay, midterm exam.
- Communicate well-supported ideas and arguments effectively within class discussion and debates, with clear oral presentation and written work articulating students' personal experiences and reflections on 17 intersections between religious belief and scientific knowledge (Quest 1, H). **Assessment:** active class participation, experiential learning component, discussion questions.

Connection: *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and*

professional development at UF and beyond.

- Connect course content with students' intellectual, personal, and professional lives at UF and beyond. (Quest 1). **Assessment:** experiential learning component, analytical paper.
- Reflect on students' own and others' experience with integrating belief in religious liberty in a pluralistic society, in class discussion and written work (Quest 1). **Assessment:** experiential learning component, analytical paper.

V. Quest Learning Experiences

Details of Experiential Learning Component

On **Monday, 6 October, the class will visit** the Harold & Mary Jean Hanson Rare Book Collection in the UF Smathers Library. Students will meet with the collection's curator and examine a wide range of manuscripts and early printed books related to religious freedom in the Western world. Students will experience handling these rare materials with their own hands and examining them directly. They will complete a short assignment during the session about the books they are handling (instructions to be given during the session).

Details of Self-Reflection Component

Self-reflection is built into class discussions, the in-class reading quizzes, the midterm examination, and the final analytical paper. This is indicated in the description of graded work section of this syllabus with an (R). Students will be continuously asked to reflect on how course activities and readings change their perspective on salient themes (religious freedom) and affect their view of themselves in the contemporary world. The 200-word Reflection of the visit to the Rare Book Collection will be due on **Friday, 10 October at 11:59pm.**

VI. Required Policies

Academic Policies

All academic policies in this course are consistent with university policies, which can be found here:
<https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>